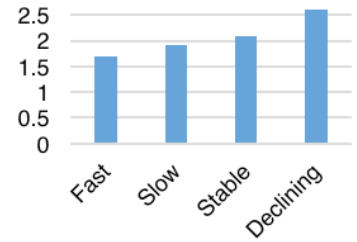


TRENDLINES

Overhead rate, including bonus



According to Zweig Group's 2016 *Financial Performance Survey*, fast-growth firms find a way to keep their overhead costs down. The overhead rate, including bonuses, for fast-growth firms was 1.69. Compare that to declining-growth firms, with an overhead rate of 2.61. When taking into account the bonus portion of this calculation, declining firms only had 5 percent of bonus-related compensation, whereas other growth categories had 20 to 30 percent. Interestingly, stable firms generated more revenue and profit per employee than any other growth category. (Special discount to TZL subscribers: Use code **SRVY35off** to order surveys at 35 percent off at zweiggroup.myshopify.com/collections/frontpage)

Making your firm a truly great place to work

"Making your firm a truly great place to work isn't easy. There's always someone out there trying to entice your best people to leave and join their firm."



Mark Zweig

EDITORIAL

We just opened up our Best Firms to Work For award entries and it got me thinking. Making your firm a truly great place to work isn't easy. There's always someone out there trying to entice your best people to leave and join their firm. Not to mention the fact it's pretty easy to start a professional service firm. These days it really takes little beyond a smart phone and a laptop computer – two things most people in your business already have.

But just because it's hard to keep your people doesn't mean you shouldn't try. In fact, it's essential to your very survival. You simply cannot take your people for granted. They are too critical to your success and have too many other options.

Here are some things I would recommend you seriously consider **IF** you want to be a great place to work:

- 1) Focus more on purpose and less on B.S.** "Purpose" means giving your people a better reason to be there other than just pay and benefits. "B.S." is stuff like employee-of-the-quarter programs, service awards based on longevity, and special parking places.
- 2) Make a distinction between high performers and everyone else.** Just like everyone doesn't deserve a medal for effort, not everyone deserves a raise, either. When times are tough there will still be people you have to take care of. But you cannot take care of them if your goal is to take care of everyone.
- 3) Make damn sure your leaders are setting**

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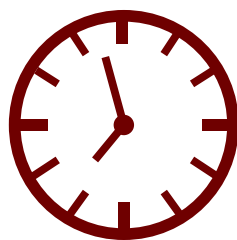
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BUSINESS NEWS

PRESCIENT PARTNERS WITH TRAMMELL CROW RESIDENTIAL TO COMPLETE TWO APARTMENT PROJECTS Prescient – a fully integrated and patented design, engineering, manufacturing, and installation solution for the construction industry – announced an ongoing partnership with Trammell Crow Residential and the completion of two innovative apartment projects in Denver.

Alexan Uptown is Prescient's tallest structure to date in Denver. The 12-story, 372-unit apartment building features more than 450,000 square feet of total building area and consists of eight stories of Prescient structure on top of a four-story concrete podium. The project, owned by Trammell Crow Residential, was contracted by Martines Palmeiro Construction, designed by Kephart Architects and engineered alongside Anchor Engineering.

"I first came to know Prescient four years ago and recognized they possessed a unique value proposition – a better way to design and build multi-unit buildings," said Matthew Schildt, managing director of development at Trammell Crow Residential. "Prescient had developed a standardized structural system and design software that promised to expedite the process and deliver significant savings."

TCR and Prescient's second conjunctive apartment project, the Alexan Cherry Creek apartments, boasts 156,000 square feet of Prescient structure. The eight-story building includes 164 units. The project was completed in partnership with architect Shears Adkins Rockmore.

"To date, we have finished two projects with the Prescient structural system and have three more in planning for 2017 and 2018. By embracing Prescient's technology and standardized approach to design and construction we are

seeing compressed design and construction schedules and a better, more cost-effective result," said Schildt.

"Working with Trammell Crow Residential on multiple projects has enabled our teams to fully utilize Prescient's standardized design, engineering, and construction platform. We've been able to optimize designs to work with our framing system, leading to significantly lower costs, better execution in the field, and shorter construction schedules. Applying advanced design and construction technology to the construction process mitigates the typical risks associated with large multi-unit projects," said John Vancker, founder of Prescient.

Prescient, which recently expanded its 12-acre, 120,000 square foot Arvada, Colorado, headquarters and manufacturing facility, is on track to complete 1.5 million square feet of projects during 2016. In February 2017, Prescient will begin production at its 10-acre site near Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. The company is building a 135,000 square foot manufacturing facility to more efficiently service markets along the East Coast up and down the I-95 corridor from Maine to Miami and all markets east of the Mississippi River.

"Prescient is fast becoming the urban-infill solution of choice in Denver. Our partnership with Trammell Crow Residential has been the cornerstone of our growth in this city, and we're thankful for that," said Satyen Patel, chairman and CEO of Prescient.

In 2016, Prescient expanded its footprint with projects beyond Colorado, including Florida, Texas, Missouri and Nebraska. In 2017, the company will expand its presence with projects in Illinois, Indiana, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Kentucky, and Tennessee.

MARK ZWEIG, from page 1

a positive example. You all know what I am talking about here! It's work ethic, how responsive they are, how responsible they are, how creative they are, how unselfish they are – and a lot more. Firm principals and managers who don't "get" this idea need to be run off quickly **OR** they will destroy morale and make **YOUR** firm a crappy place to be.

4) Work on your facility. Is it a dump? Do people have to put a trashcan under roof leaks or deal with a toilet that constantly stops up? Do they have natural light? Is it a place they would be proud to show their family and friends? Is it clean and organized or a big fat mess? All of these things and more should not be problems for people to contend with today. Solve them and make your place a better place to be.

5) Work on your culture. Do you celebrate achievement? If not, you should? Are people nice to each other and respectful of everyone in the organization? If not, they should be. Do the best people get the rewards? If not, they should. Does management share financial information and trust the employees to do their jobs? If not, they should. Culture is so important! You can't ignore it.

I'm out of space. I could talk about this subject all day because the truth is, most AEC firms have a long way to go before becoming one of the Best Firms to Work For! ▀

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THE ZWEIG LETTERS

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Hiring for keeps

Research shows that a good onboarding program is the best way to keep the people you hire, and save a chunk of change on recruitment and training.



**Kelly
Thompson**

The process of accepting a job seems much akin to accepting a first date – you perform online research (or, in the case of dating, secretly stalk them via social media), you ask a plethora of questions to ensure values align, and you seek the opinions of others. When the big first day/date finally arrives, you’re excited, nervous, a bit cautious, and, most of all, curious – curious as to how you will like it and where it will ultimately lead.



**Kimberly
Cassella**

Whether a first date or a first day at a new job, it’s the impact of the overall experience that determines whether you walk away feeling eager to pursue or dreadful of what’s to come. For a new hire, it’s day one and the subsequent few months (the honeymoon period) that can determine whether a new employee stays; therefore, creating an effective onboarding experience is more important than ever.

According to a study by Equifax Workforce Solutions, more than 40 percent of turnover happens within the first month and another 10 percent or more leave before their one year anniversary. Studies show this turnover can be attributed to a less formal onboarding program.

“Whether a first date or a first day at a new job, it’s the impact of the overall experience that determines whether you walk away feeling eager to pursue or dreadful of what’s to come.”

Who should be responsible for this program? The simple yet complex answer is everyone. Your HR department can lead the effort and help arm your new employees with forms, general information and a go get em’ attitude. But in today’s improved

See KELLY THOMPSON & KIMBERLY CASSELLA, page 4

**GUEST
SPEAKERS**



ON THE MOVE

O'CONNELL ROBERTSON ADDS KEY STAFF TO ENGINEERING TEAM

O'Connell Robertson has added three registered engineers to its engineering team, further strengthening the firm's extensive MEP engineering experience and expertise.

Jeremy Zorn, PE, is an electrical engineer based in the firm's San Antonio office. He has more than 15 years' experience providing design and construction administration services on a variety of projects in the San Antonio area. His experience includes the design of power distribution, interior and exterior lighting, fire detection and alarm, and emergency power and grounding systems. Zorn earned a bachelor's degree in electrical

engineering from Texas A&M University in 1999.

Trent Topham, PE, is a mechanical engineer with more than 20 years of design and project management experience throughout Texas. He has designed HVAC and plumbing systems for numerous educational, healthcare, and other institutional projects, and has extensive experience with historical preservation projects. Based in O'Connell Robertson's Austin office, Topham is also a graduate of Texas A&M University, earning a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering in 1985.

Aaron Dennington, PE, LEED AP, is an electrical engineer based in the firm's Austin office.

He has more than nine years' experience in electrical design, including code compliance, analysis, specifications, submittals, and reports. Aaron earned an M.S. in electrical engineering, manufacturing systems from the University of Texas at Austin in 2001 and a bachelor's degree in physics from Abilene Christian University in 1999.

"These experienced engineers are an important addition to our team," said Nick Patterson, PE, LEED AP BD+C, a principal and director of MEP engineering at O'Connell Robertson. "They support our mission-driven approach to providing maintainable and efficient MEP designs that positively impact all who experience and interact with our work."

KELLY THOMPSON & KIMBERLY CASSELLA, from page 3

economy, where firms are competing for the best and brightest talent, you need multiple "players" who can help make your onboarding program a key differentiator. In addition to an HR team member, key players should include the employee's manager, an appointed "buddy" who can provide day-to-day advice/guidance, and all other employees who are prepared to fully welcome the new talent.

"Many factors can play into a new employee's decision to leave a company. Research shows, however, that not only can a formal onboarding process cut attrition, it also cuts the exorbitant cost of recruiting, hiring and training a replacement."

Along with multiple players, you'll want to dedicate several months for each new employee to complete your successful onboarding program. Based on a recent survey Little conducted, it is clear the majority of new employees need approximately three months to get fully acclimated to their new job, co-workers, and surroundings. Our survey also revealed that deliberate engagement throughout an employee's first year is particularly important. Formalizing a successful onboarding program means thinking beyond the traditional desk supplies, a name plate, and a stack of business cards. The following are a few things we learned through our survey of newbies and the critical components of a more formal program:

- **Start before they begin.** Years ago, it was the norm to receive a three inch binder on your first day that was chock-full of forms to complete, materials to review, and articles to read. These days much of this information is electronic, so why not go ahead and share with employees before they start? This allows them time to fill out paperwork and a chance to get acclimated to the company prior to day one.
- **Keep it simple.** As with many things, less can be more

when it comes to a successful first week for new employees. Consider extending your new employee orientation to a few hours over the course of a week rather than cramming it into several eight-hour days. Breaking up the information and focusing each day on one specific point (for example, benefits) allows the employee to better digest the information and deepens their engagement with the company.

- **Demystify any buzzwords and acronyms.** The AEC industry is full of programs and certifications that mimic alphabet soup. New hires with related experience may recognize these but, for those who don't, you can mitigate confusion with a fun cheat sheet that introduces industry and internal organizational terminology. After all, no one wants to try to decipher FU (follow-up) on the POS (point of sale) presentation.
- **Create a buddy system.** Feeling connected is one of the most critical components of a new employee's onboarding experience. Assign a buddy to each new employee who can serve as a single point-of-contact for work questions, concerns, and/or guidance during the first few months of employment. To ensure a level of comfort, be certain the buddy is a peer and not a manager who is responsible for the new employee's job performance.
- **Give them the lay of the land.** Through our survey, we found this to be the number one thing we can improve upon here at Little. New employees want to feel comfortable navigating their new surroundings. Depending on the size of your space, you may want to provide them with a graphic map/floorplan that highlights various support groups (accounting, HR, marketing, IT), printers, restrooms, and conference rooms. Also consider providing a map or list of nearby restaurants, gyms, or attractions they can check out during lunch or after work.

Many factors can play into a new employee's decision to leave a company. Research shows, however, that not only can a formal onboarding process cut attrition, it also cuts the exorbitant cost of recruiting, hiring, and training a replacement. Take the time to implement the proper program and you'll take weeks off the learning curve and get a fully-productive employee faster than ever. ▀

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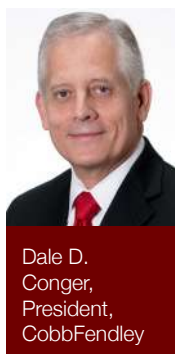
PROFILE



Make it right

An internal market for the company's stock, and a company culture of 'just get it done' are two key drivers of the firm's success.

By DALE D. CONGER



CobbFendley (Hot Firm #21 for 2016) was formed in Houston in 1980 by John "Odis" Cobb and William Fendley to provide professional civil engineering and land surveying services. In addition to its headquarters in Houston, CobbFendley has regional offices throughout Texas, and in New Mexico, Louisiana, and Utah. The civil engineering and surveying firm works for public and private clients almost on a 50-50 basis.

The firm has a few winning ideas on incentive compensation and employee ownership, and has an interesting take on company culture.

■ **Incentive compensation/bonus/employee ownership.** Our founders created an environment to perpetuate the company after their retirement. An ESOP, or employee stock ownership plan, was established to begin the financing of their transition, but the majority of the ownership was passed to a group of senior managers and to the company treasury. This "internal sale" most assuredly generated less capital return to the founders than

they would have seen with an outside sale, but they valued seeing the company continue after they were retired. There is no right answer to the question of whether to sell a firm. It just comes down to whether the goal is maximum return to the owners, or whether there are other valuable outcomes, such as the continuation of the firm as an independent business.

"An ESOP, or employee stock ownership plan, was established to begin the financing of their transition, but the majority of the ownership was passed to a group of senior managers and to the company treasury."

Through a generous incentive compensation program, direct ownership of company stock is

See COBBFENDLEY, page 8



SPOTLIGHT ON: Brant Aden

PROFILE



Foresite Group recently completed a practice field complex for the athletic department for the University of Georgia Bulldogs' football program. / Foresite Group

Give a minute, don't ask for one

Georgia firm grew by nearly 38 percent last year and is poised to start working nationally, and even internationally.

By LIISA ANDREASSEN
Correspondent



Brant Aden,
CEO, Foresite
Group

Before founding the **Foresite Group** (Best Firm #18 Multidiscipline for 2016) in 2003, Brant Aden, CEO of the 120-person firm headquartered in Norcross, Georgia, spent nearly five years working for a large engineering firm where he did a little of everything. He spent a lot of time working on large commercial developments focusing on storm water management, but also dabbled in water and wastewater, residential design, airport design, and parks and recreation.

“Rally your team around a vision. Whether things are going well or not, help your team know what they are striving towards.”

“My design team was very busy, but amid the workload I started my MBA coursework and took away so many professional advancements from this large company,” Aden says. “I am very thankful.”

Today, he has two talented partners. They all worked together prior to founding Foresite Group.

“The three of us are wired differently which, I believe, allows us to debate and arrive at great decisions,” he says.

A CONVERSATION WITH ADEN.

The Zweig Letter: What was the inspiration for the firm's name?

Brant Aden: The name Foresite Group is more a vision and philosophy. There are too many consulting firms with people's names in them. It didn't fit who we wanted to be. A name like Foresite Group is all-inclusive to more people and services.

TZL: What are some of the most significant changes you have seen since its founding?

BA: In 2003, we were founded in north Atlanta with three people (including myself). Since then, we have evolved into a 120-person multidisciplinary firm with an array of new people and skillsets. We have also branched out into Florida, Alabama,





Washington, D.C., and Texas. In 2013, we rebranded our firm to celebrate our 10-year anniversary with a new logo, website, and initiatives.

“Always work with your door open and be available at all times. Your team sees a closed door as a closed invitation. When your door is open to your team, your mind and experience are open to all who crave it.”

TZL: What are your key strengths? What do you feel the key strengths are for an effective leader?

BA: Here are my top six philosophies of a great leader, most of which I reflect, but one or two that I want to improve upon:

- 1) Treat your associates and employees with respect. Listen to ideas and participate in new approaches. It's so easy to over-talk and insert your own ideas. Ask questions instead of instilling the final idea.
- 2) Rally your team around a vision. Whether things are going well or not, help your team know what they are striving toward. Be consistent with messaging about goals that connect to the vision. Nothing is worse than an inconsistent message. Once you set those goals, stay consistent. It's not just setting the goals, but then empowering people by giving them what they need to accomplish those goals.
- 3) Always work with your door open and be available at all times. Your team sees a closed door as a closed invitation. When your door is open to your team, your mind and experience are open to all who crave it. As a boss and leader, your people want to learn and hear from you instead of the others that may be available. Please do not lean on the phrase, "Give me a minute." Your high-level responsibilities will rest for a minute while you give one.
- 4) Value your employees' time. Even in the midst of deadlines and client meetings, remember that taking the time to meet with your team at agreed upon times is important to keep the balls rolling.
- 5) Allow time to be creative and encourage that. Innovation comes from creativity. Allowing our people to be creative is what motivates them.
- 6) We all make mistakes and it's ok to own up to them. As leaders we also need to own up to mistakes and learn, sometimes the hard way. As a team, we can learn and move on together.

TZL: How would you describe your leadership style?

BA: During my MBA coursework, we did many case studies authored by various professors and experts at Harvard Business School. I learned of the six leadership styles that

seem to apply across the board – whether service or product-based firms. I trust our people implicitly. I am a macro-manager in the sense that I want all of our associates to be actively engaged in our vision and strategy, but also to be encouraged to spread their creative wings. I also know that failure can be a good thing when redirected to huge success. For many more reasons I seem to fall into the democratic and coaching tiers of leadership styles.

TZL: To date, what has been your greatest challenge and how did you deal with it?

BA: We are in the midst of one of the biggest growth years our firm has ever experienced in terms of people, geographic locations, equipment, physical plant, capital expenditures, and recognition of revenue. We will grow almost 38 percent in just a year with a new practice area that will allow our firm to do work across the country and possibly internationally. It's exciting and challenging at the same time. Foresite Group, in a sense, has been waiting for this moment with good capitalization, low overhead and long-term debt, and most importantly the energy and passion to make this move.

TZL: What is your vision for the future of Foresite Group?

BA: To double the size of our piece of the pie in five years in terms of services, locations, and revenue. We want to have amazing people who want to grow old with us. My two partners and I have authored a plan to bring in more owners of the firm as soon as next year. My vision is to double the number of owners as well. Why? I believe that to grow substantially over the next few years we will need more stakeholders that have the skillset to create a more valuable organization for our clients and our associates to invest in and retire.

“I tend to tune out the competition over the last few years and want our firm to focus on building relationships that allow us to grow with them and weather a storm from time to time. Our fees are never the lowest in town, but our clients know that they get so much from our firm.”

TZL: Tell me about a recent project you are especially proud of and why.

BA: We recently completed a practice field complex for the athletic department for the University of Georgia Bulldogs' football program. The project included artificial turf fields, two six-story steel press boxes, civil and utility design, storm water management, traffic and access management, landscape and hardscape design, retaining walls, and local

See Q&A, page 8

COBBFENDLEY, from page 5

made available to selected staff. About 10 percent of the staff owns shares directly, in addition to their ESOP participation. The stock is made desirable by the steady increase in value as the firm grows and by salary bonuses. Many managers participate in numerically derived incentive compensation plans that reward good performance of their groups. These managers' pursuits of their goals are also a key to the continued growth and success of the firm. As they seek to achieve the annual goals laid out for them, their groups grow naturally and generate profits, creating a rising tide for the company. This all works to create an internal market for the stock held by the most senior stockholders, who are under a mandatory "sell-down" arrangement to keep stock from becoming concentrated in too few hands and causing a future outside sale crisis.

"Company culture. This term comes up frequently in conversations around our firm. We do a lot of our college recruiting through internships and we find that even the interns will refer to our culture as one of the attractive things about the firm."

Q&A, from page 7

and state permitting. We integrated members of four of our practice areas into one project that has led to more opportunities with UGA.

TZL: How have you helped your firm to outperform some competitors? What do you feel sets you apart?

BA: I believe it's the relationships with our clients. We pursue and hire people who are exceptionally competent, but who are also great to be around, have fun personalities, and embody urgency. I tend to tune out the competition over the last few years and want our firm to focus on building relationships that allow us to grow with them and weather a storm from time to time. Our fees are never the lowest in town, but our clients know that they get so much from our firm.

TZL: What's one thing most people at the firm don't know about you?

BA: I'm a recovering soccer player for more than 23 years. I've played all over the southeast and Virginia. I'm also a recovering triathlete, although I'm planning an Olympic distance and a half Ironman event in 2017. I have a running shoe fetish that is pretty silly.

TZL: Dream vacation destination?

BA: Maldives.

TZL: Last book read?

BA: Well, I tune out to books like the *Divergent* or *The Hunger Games* series. I might catch some jokes on that one. But a few books I enjoyed recently are the Steve Jobs bio, Marcus Lattrell in *Lone Survivor*, and the life of Chris Kyle



■ **Company culture.** This term comes up frequently in conversations around our firm. We do a lot of our college recruiting through internships and we find that even the interns will refer to our culture as one of the attractive things about the firm. So, if we could actually describe our culture – we might have something! Seriously, it is not something you can design, implement, or change easily. It seems to flow from the management approach of the firm. We always strive to give clients what they need, not what we are trying to sell. We stay true to our stated agreements and finish our projects. We "make it right" if there is a problem. We value our people's opinions and time. Our leaders pitch in and help wherever there is a need.

We find that people making the transition into our firm from large firms are sometimes disoriented by the lack of hierarchy and the "just get it done" approach we follow. And lastly, our corporate organization follows the concept that we have clients as well – our people. The organization is here to serve the staff – to allow them to do their work as well and efficiently as possible with minimal distractions from "business stuff." ▀

in *American Sniper*.

TZL: What's the last movie you saw?

BA: *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*.

TZL: What's the best piece of work-related advice you've ever gotten?

BA: This can be for personal or business – "Be relative."

"Treat your associates and employees with respect. Listen to ideas and participate in new approaches. It's so easy to over-talk and insert your own ideas. Ask questions instead of instilling the final idea."

TZL: Who is a leader you admire?

BA: Chris Kyle, Navy SEAL, arguably one of the best military snipers, leaders, and patriots we have seen in recent times. He is resolute, decisive, humble, and no matter where he goes any group of men would follow him into battle without hesitation.

TZL: When you're not working, what types of activities do you enjoy?

BA: Spending time with my two children, live sporting events, cooking on my Green Egg, socializing, working out, cycling, and running.

TZL: Favorite lunch?

BA: Anything – as long as a Blue Moon beer accompanies it. ▀



Burnout. Can you avoid it?

We work a lot of hours and handle a lot of stress, so it's important to take charge of life, both in and out of the office.



Stephen
Lucy

BEST PRACTICES

How many hours do you work each week? As compared with the rest of the world, Americans put in many more hours than our global counterparts. If you want proof, all you have to do is consider the statistics. According to the International Labour Organization, “Americans work 137 more hours per year than Japanese workers; 260 more hours per year than British workers; and 499 more hours per year than French workers.”

Clearly, our level of expectation as a culture seems to exceed that of the rest of the world. We wear it as a badge of honor, but at what cost to ourselves and others within our firms? And if we expect this work effort, are we driving our best talent away from our industry which is an industry already suffering through a shortage of workforce as a result of the Great Recession?

The best place to begin to address this challenge is with ourselves. As a firm leader, you set the example to be emulated by your team. If you cannot align your career with the rest of your life to avoid burnout, how can you expect those around you to avoid it? For those who are facing possible burnout, consider these recommendations:

1) Find a new career focus. This does not mean to

“As a firm leader, you set the example to be emulated by your team. If you cannot align your career with the rest of your life to avoid burnout, how can you expect those around you to avoid it?”

pack your bags and give up your current career, but it does mean you should find and focus on those aspects of your career that you find more exciting and exhilarating. Money alone won't address your burnout issues, but motivation certainly does.

2) Build up an external peer-to-peer network. You

See STEPHEN LUCY, page 10



BUSINESS NEWS

ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS USA WINS ARCONIC FOUNDATION INAUGURAL GRANT TO TRAIN FUTURE ENGINEERS Arconic Foundation’s \$300,000 grant to EWB-USA will advance engineering education, knowledge sharing, and workforce development across the globe.

Engineers Without Borders USA announced a multi-year grantmaking partnership with the newly formed Arconic Foundation. The \$300,000 investment, Arconic Foundation’s inaugural grant, will support Engineers Without Borders organizations around the world working to strengthen and promote engineering education and equip the next generation of global innovators. By 2020, more than 1,000 students are targeted to complete the program. The partnership will include activities in select markets where Arconic has an operational footprint and an employee base: the United States, the U.K., Mexico, France, Germany, Canada, and Brazil.

Arconic Foundation is the philanthropic arm of **Arconic Inc.**, which launched on November

1, 2016, as a global leader in multi-materials innovation, precision engineering, and advanced manufacturing. Arconic Foundation is an independently endowed foundation.

“We regularly witness the profound impact highly skilled students and young professionals can have in some of the world’s most challenged areas,” said Cathy Leslie, EWB-USA’s executive director. “The Foundation’s investment in our mission is reflective of our shared values to build a better world.”

“Partnering with Engineers Without Borders reflects the vision and values of Arconic and the mission of Arconic Foundation – to support a future of breakthrough innovation. And it all starts with engineering,” said Esra Ozer, president, Arconic Foundation. “On this, our first day as a new company, with a new focus, we could not be prouder to support an organization that so closely mirrors our priorities.”

The program’s goal is to ensure that current and future engineers have the skills to

conceive of, coordinate, manage and lead global projects. EWB-USA will identify critical education experiences and develop a blueprint of the skills needed. EWB organizations will use the grant for fieldwork and online courses; students and young professionals will develop skills in leadership, project management, communication, systems thinking, and community engagement.

Arconic Foundation’s focus is the advancement of science, technology, engineering, and math education and skills training worldwide. This focus, combined with the special emphasis on engaging and creating access for underrepresented and underserved groups, complements the work of EWB-USA and its peers. EWB-USA’s thousands of student and professional volunteers partner with communities across the globe to solve small-scale infrastructure problems through humanitarian engineering.

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are not the only one facing burnout. You need to be open to discussing how you feel with your peers and not just peers internal to your firm. After all, some of your stress may actually stem from your internal partners or peers. Step out of that internal group to assess your situation and solicit advice. Odds are these individuals are facing some of the same issues you are dealing with and who better to understand the pressures of our industry than others within the industry.

3) Don’t over promise or over commit. Be realistic about what you and your team can or cannot do. One of my peers recently gave me some excellent advice when he said, “Sometimes, you just have to leave the hay in the field because the barn is only so big.” Absent adequate resources, there can be substantial risk related to over committing your staff in terms of workload and the organizational processes required to support that workload. And risk generates stress.

“Rediscovering and prioritizing what inspires us the most are important keys to reinventing work and life.”

4) Don’t be an “army of one.” We probably all recognize this as a prior slogan for the U.S. Army, but its use was discontinued in 2006 as it was contrary to their core belief in teamwork. Yet our industry, which touts that it is built on teamwork, still tends to reward and congratulate those who put in exorbitant hours working by themselves. Rely on your team and the strength of its combined skill set to jointly complete tasks. And most of all, do not forget to recognize all team members for their accomplishments as compliments are a great stress reliever.

5) Walk away from your electronic tether. My guess is that at least one time today you have informed a client that you are available to them at any time, 24/7. Really? Just because you can be connected does not make this the right decision

“Let’s face it. Burnout can happen. Every one of us has experienced times that are stressful and challenging, and fresh insights about how to overcome these situations can offer a clearer and more restive path forward.”

for either you or your client. Everyone gains from some time separated from the challenges faced at work. So lay down the phone, turn off the laptop and walk away.

6) Sometimes you just need a change. A friend who was an office leader at a very prestigious, global architectural firm recently changed jobs after more than a decade in this position. He had another decade of work in front of him, and while he enjoyed and was very good at his current job, he wanted the opportunity to rekindle the passion for his profession by facing the challenges offered by the new position. Consider all opportunities as starting fresh may end up being your best option.

7) Recognize that work is only one part of your life. Everybody is unique. For me, my work is intertwined in all that I do and I find it very fulfilling, but my happiest times are spent with my family. Figure out how to recharge your system. Identify what will enable you to be your best all-around person and make time to participate.

Let’s face it. Burnout can happen. Every one of us has experienced times that are stressful and challenging, and fresh insights about how to overcome these situations can offer a clearer and more restive path forward. Rediscovering and prioritizing what inspires us the most are important keys to reinventing work and life. ▀

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Big and nimble

Philadelphia firm undertakes huge effort to improve CRM, update brand, and otherwise remain ahead of the curve.



Joseph
Viscuso

GUEST SPEAKER

For Pennoni (Hot Firm #48 for 2016) marketing “success” can be viewed in a variety of ways – the quantity and monetary value of proposals won, the number of client meetings scheduled, the frequency of our Facebook page likes, our press release hit rate, or the amount of business cards collected at a conference or tradeshow. No single form of measurement is wrong or right. To truly measure success, we must “calculate” using all such factors, and more. And to truly be successful, it takes attention and effort in all such areas. Not all firms tackle marketing the same; it’s our collective effort and promise to seek innovative approaches and disband those that no longer work that helps Pennoni continue its path to success.

CLIENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT. In 2016, Pennoni adopted a new and improved CRM system, or Customer Relationship Management. This was a tough sell for the firm, as the latest rollout is the fourth in the firm’s history. After a year and a half of site construction, focus groups, consultation, data migration, and training, the system is now in place and has been integrated across our business practices. Through the adoption of CRM, Pennoni is taking a step toward performance optimization and towards maintaining client relationships. The capabilities of this system have proven to increase margins through providing business development efficiencies, better pipeline management, accurate sales predictions, and a clearer view of the market.

“Not all firms tackle marketing the same; it’s our collective effort and promise to seek innovative approaches and disband those that no longer work that helps Pennoni continue its path to success.”

PROPOSALS. We understand the importance of proposals to the AEC industry. Proposals are an opportunity for firms to best demonstrate their

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ON THE MOVE

BRANDI BUSH, PE JOINS LJA AS PROJECT MANAGER IN DALLAS TRANSPORTATION DIVISION

In her new role, Brandi Bush will manage roadway and related design for schematic and PS&E transportation projects, providing excellent client service ranging from small local roadways to complex urban freeways. Bush will also mentor junior staff and assist in the business development and financial success of the division.

Bush joins **LJA** as a former TxDOT employee from the Dallas District Traffic Operations division with prior consultant experience in the Midwest. She brings extensive knowledge and expertise in roadway, bridge, and drainage design, as well as traffic signal design, ITS, and pavement marking design. She has already hit the ground running, managing the PS&E for a project providing continuous frontage roads along US 69 over Pine Island Bayou incorporating two new bridges for the

TxDOT Beaumont District.

“Brandi is a tremendous addition to the group, and we are fortunate to have such a positive and experienced professional enhancing the team. Her varied background spanning roadway, drainage, structural, and traffic operations design combined with her constructive solution-driven attitude has made her an immediate asset to the LJA Dallas office and our clients,” said Michael Coyle, PE, senior project manager.

Bush is a licensed PE in the state of Texas with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She also has advanced knowledge of MicroStation and GEOPAK software.

EMPLOYEE-OWNERS ELECT NEW MEMBERS TO SEH BOARD OF DIRECTORS Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. –an 800-person engineering

and architecture firm headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota – named two new board members at their 2016 Annual Meeting. The SEH shareholders and ESOP members elected internal candidates Scott Lange and Dave Simons to serve on the SEH board of directors.

Scott Lange, PE, is a principal, client service manager, and project manager for private industrial clients and projects. He joined SEH in 1998, and most recently served three years on the SEH board of directors. Lange was re-elected to serve for another three years.

Dave Simons, PE, is a principal, client service manager, and project manager. He joined SEH in 1989, and currently serves as the office manager at the New Richmond office.

The SEH board of directors provides policy and general business practice guidelines to the corporation and its officers.

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qualifications and experience. This demonstration is deeper than the staff proposed and clients listed. Proposals are a platform to demonstrate creativity, innovation, and a commitment to an ever-evolving industry. This past year, Pennoni underwent a companywide brand re-fresh, which included a new company logo, color palette, font type kit, and layout for all proposal material. In addition, a new and improved CRM system was adopted, which is used to track the proposal process, from lead identification, through shortlist, and award. Pennoni’s proposal process and documents represent a new streamlined process and a commitment to evolution.

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY. As a result of Pennoni’s brand refresh, which began its rollout in 2015, the firm has launched a new and improved website, redesigned its quarterly newsletter, restructured its company intranet, and has increased its presence on social media. Pennoni’s Marketing group reevaluated its marketing efforts, with the understanding that our audience spans potential clients, teaming partners, and possible staff.

“For Pennoni marketing ‘success’ can be viewed in a variety of ways – the quantity and monetary value of proposals won, the number of client meetings scheduled, the frequency of our Facebook page likes, our press release hit rate, or the amount of business cards collected at a conference or tradeshow.”

For example, our old website had more than 500 pages, which is entirely too many for any one person to navigate. The trend today is to have a website that is clean and

“Our brand refresh truly represents Pennoni, as an ever-changing firm open to opportunities to innovate and make a difference.”

concise; end-users want to get on, find basic information, and then contact us to learn more.

The new site was designed with all audiences in mind: clients, teaming partners, competitors, and existing and potential staff. The redesigned site is in line with our company-wide refresh, lending itself to provide our professional qualifications and experience in a simple, clear, and understated way. The improved accessibility and navigability allows site visitors to readily locate the information they seek.

Because Pennoni is about people, we’ve designed the site into three primary domains:

- Who We Are, which highlights our tremendous leadership team, provides the firm’s latest announcements, and details our prestigious Ellipse Award.
- What We Do, which breaks down our Service and Market capabilities, and provides links through project Profiles to best demonstrate our multidisciplinary offerings.
- Work Here, which provides instant access to our job postings and gives details regarding the employment benefits that Pennoni offers.

In addition to these three areas, social media buttons make the site easily shared with colleagues, clients, family, and friends.

Our brand refresh truly represents Pennoni, as an ever-changing firm open to opportunities to innovate and make a difference. ▀

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